# Sextortion scammers target teenage boys using AI



Sextortion scammers are increasingly employing artificial intelligence to target teenage boys, reports The Irish News. This disturbing trend has led to a significant rise in crimes against children and young people.

The tactics employed by scammers include the creation of fake explicit images featuring their victims using AI technology. The scammers then threaten to disseminate these manipulated images to the victims' friends unless they provide a payment, often small amounts such as £100. This approach aims to exploit the fear of public humiliation while encouraging victims to remain silent about the threats.

Reports indicate that several families in Northern Ireland have sought assistance from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) after being targeted. One family shared their experience with The Irish News, detailing how their son received threats that AI-generated photos, ostensibly of him in compromising situations, would be shared unless he complied with a £100 demand. In a proactive move, the teenager contacted the PSNI, which successfully facilitated the recovery of the funds. A family member noted, 'He was very annoyed about it... he couldn’t sleep,' but praised the police for their timely intervention.

Colin Stitt, head of service at Safer Schools NI, reported that his organisation had been approached by the families of three to four young individuals who found themselves in similar predicaments in recent months. He noted that while such sextortion techniques were previously aimed predominantly at adult men requiring larger sums, there has been a notable shift towards younger targets, often involving more modest financial demands. Stitt pointed out the urgent need for awareness, stating, 'We are not talking about thousands of pounds - we are talking about £80, £100.'

Sextortion scams are reportedly more prevalent during holidays, such as the upcoming Easter school break, when young people are generally more active online. Stitt highlighted a concerning pattern wherein individuals are first coerced into providing personal images, which are then altered using AI to create sexually explicit content for blackmail.

The situation is exacerbated by the tactics employed against schools. Some independent institutions in Northern Ireland have reported being targeted, where scammers harvested images of students and staff from school websites and social media. These images were then manipulated to produce sexualised content, further complicating the issue of privacy and safety in digital spaces.

Stitt emphasized the importance of not succumbing to demands from these scammers, urging those affected to report incidents to the police rather than paying the extortionists. He also raised concerns about the frequency of personal content shared online, prompting discussions about privacy and online security.

In recognition of the emotional toll such experiences can take on young victims, he advised parents to remain vigilant and supportive. 'Any adult or any school is... thinking suicide prevention planning, no matter how robust a young person may seem,' he said, highlighting the significant psychological impact fear, stigma, and feelings of shame can have on adolescents involved in these situations.

The PSNI noted an initial surge in sextortion reports, with figures peaking at around 70 monthly in 2023. However, preventative measures and awareness campaigns have reportedly led to a decrease, with recent averages falling to around 35 reports a month. Despite the reduction, the issue remains a serious concern and authorities are committed to ongoing education about online safety.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.thorn.org/blog/new-research-from-thorn-financial-sextortion-on-the-rise-targeting-teen-boys/> - This article from Thorn highlights the rise in financial sextortion targeting teenage boys, emphasizing the use of AI in creating fake explicit images to blackmail victims.
* <https://www.iwf.org.uk/news-media/news/teenage-boys-targeted-as-hotline-sees-heartbreaking-increase-in-child-sextortion-reports/> - The Internet Watch Foundation reports a significant increase in child sextortion cases, particularly targeting teenage boys, with financial extortion being a common tactic.
* <https://www.axios.com/2023/06/23/artificial-intelligence-sexual-exploitation-children-technology> - This Axios article discusses how AI technologies are being used in sextortion schemes to create fake explicit images, impacting minors and highlighting the legal challenges in addressing these crimes.
* <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/washingtondc/news/press-releases/fbi-unveils-public-service-announcement-campaign-to-raise-awareness-about-sextortion> - Although the specific URL is not available, the FBI has addressed sextortion and the use of AI, emphasizing their efforts to inform the public about these threats and encourage victims to come forward.